

 <p>Scoping Document March 5, 2009</p>	<p>Monte Cristo Area Sheep Allotments Environmental Analysis</p>	<p>USDA Forest Service Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest Ogden Ranger District Cache, Rich and Weber Counties, Utah</p> <p>Comments Due: April 6, 2009</p>
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The Purpose of this Scoping Document

This document is to inform you that the Ogden Ranger District is beginning an environmental assessment of the land and resources contained within four sheep allotments on the Ogden District (see attached maps). The allotments to be studied at this time include Blake Hollow, Bountiful, Dry Bread, and Little Monte sheep allotments. Collectively these allotments are referred to as the Monte Cristo Area Sheep Allotments. Located about 30 miles northeast of Ogden, Utah, these allotments lie within the Bear, Cache-Box Elder, and North Wasatch-Ogden Valley management areas of the WCNF Revised Forest Plan.

We would like to hear your comments, concerns, and suggestions regarding the future management of rangeland resources within these four sheep allotments.

Note: In March 2008 the Uinta National Forest and the Wasatch-Cache National Forest were combined into one administrative unit. Each of these Forests continues to operate under individual Forest Plans approved in 2003. When the term Wasatch-Cache is used in this document it refers to the Wasatch-Cache Planning Unit of the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest.

What is being proposed?

The Ogden RD proposes to reauthorize livestock grazing on NFS lands on the Bountiful, Little Monte, Blake Hollow and Dry Bread sheep allotments at a level and in a manner consistent with direction in the WCNF Revised Forest Plan and other applicable laws and regulations. Based on preliminary discussions about current allotment conditions and monitoring that took place during the summer of 2008, it appears current grazing management is meeting or moving towards desired conditions as stated in the Forest Plan on the majority of rangelands within each of the allotments. Therefore, the proposed action would continue current grazing management for each of the allotments.

As is currently occurring, livestock grazing would be reauthorized using Forest Plan standards and guidelines and desired conditions to manage livestock use. It is expected that by continuing to follow this direction, rangelands will be maintained at or continue to move toward desired conditions. This proposal recognizes the continuing need for forage production from Forest Service administered lands as identified in the Forest Plan.

Why are we proposing this project?

The purpose and need for this project is to determine, prior to the time the permits expire, whether or not to reauthorize livestock grazing on these four sheep allotments. If reauthorized, livestock grazing will conform to Forest Plan direction to meet or move toward the desired conditions.



Current Grazing

Grazing is currently authorized on these four sheep allotments under existing permits and is managed per their respective Allotment Management Plans (AMPs). Each year, specific direction is provided in the Annual Operating Instructions (AOIs) for each allotment. Reauthorization of livestock grazing would require reviewing and updating existing AMPs as necessary.

The following table provides information about current grazing on each of the four sheep allotments.

Allotment	NFS Acres*	Livestock Number-Class	Period of Use**	Grazing System
Blake Hollow	3,990	1000 - ewe/lamb	7/1-9/30 (for 70 days)	Deferred rotation
Bountiful	5,609	800 - ewe/lamb	7/1-9/30 (for 80 days)	Deferred rotation
Dry Bread	1,907	1150 - ewe/lamb	7/1-9/15 (for 65 days)	Deferred rotation
Little Monte	4,101	1000 - ewe/lamb	7/1-9/30 (for 70 days)	Deferred rotation

* From WCNF Revised Forest Plan

** The period of use is specified in the grazing permit as a number of consecutive days within the grazing season for that allotment (i.e. for Blake Hollow, the permitted season is any consecutive 70 days between 7/1 and 9/30 each year).

Based on information gathered and monitoring conducted during the summer and fall of 2008, preliminary interdisciplinary team discussions indicate that it appears current grazing management is meeting or moving towards desired conditions as stated in the Forest Plan on the majority of rangelands on each of these four allotments. A few isolated areas of concern (upland areas of less than 1 acre, associated with sheep bed grounds) will be addressed through permit administration.

A review of range monitoring indicates the apparent rangeland conditions on the majority of each of the allotments are satisfactory and moving toward desired conditions as indicated by adequate ground cover and variety in species composition across the allotments.

Preliminary soils reports indicate ground cover is meeting or exceeding Forest Plan standards of 85% of potential on the majority of all of these allotments. A review of the hydrologic and aquatic features during the summer of 2008 indicates that current livestock grazing has had little impact on the water resources within the allotment. No long-term adverse effects to streambanks, water quality, or aquatic habitats were noted during the reviews.

Preliminary Alternatives

In addition to the proposed action presented above, a “no action” alternative will be considered. Under the no action alternative, there would be no grazing on any of the four sheep allotments after grazing is phased out over a three-year period. Other alternatives may be developed if any significant issues are raised by the public during this scoping period.

Preliminary Issues

Preliminary issues identified by the interdisciplinary team include the effects on aquatic species, cultural resources, recreation, vegetation, water and soils, wildlife, and threatened, endangered, and sensitive wildlife and plant species.

What is the Decision to be made?

The decision to be made is whether or not to reauthorize grazing on these four sheep allotments following a careful review of specialist reports, biological evaluations/assessments, public comments, and other pertinent analyses, and if so, under what conditions.

Who will make the Decision?

The decision will be made by the Responsible Official, Ogden District Ranger Chip Sibbernsen. The decision will be documented in a Decision Notice, subject to public review and appeal.

When do we need your Response?

Please submit your scoping comments by April 6, 2009. Comments should be directed to:

Attn: Ogden Sheep Allotments
Chip Sibbernsen
Ogden Ranger District
507 25th Street, Suite 103
Ogden, Utah 84401

E-mail comments to: comments-intermtn-wasatch-cache-ogden@fs.fed.us

Thank you,

/S/ Chip Sibbernsen

3/5/2009

CHIP SIBBERNSEN
Ogden District Ranger

DATE

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